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## REMINISCENCES OF A PIONEER.

BY J. KUHRTS.

When I look at the magnificent city of Los Angeles today, it brings back to my memory the great improvements I have witnessed since the time of my arrival in this city.

In 1857, in company with John Searles, I left San Francisco with a big mule team for Slate Range and Los Angeles. The road we took was by the way of San Jose, Pacheco Pass, San Joaquin Plains, Visalia, Lynn's Valley, Green-Horn Mountains, Kern River, Walker's Pass, Indian Wells, across the desert and Borax Lake to Slate Range.

After unloading my teams at the mines, I made my way to Los Angeles. Then I had to make part of the road myself; no team had ever traveled that way before. The road I took was by the way of Bed-rock Cañon, and a place I called El Paso, where I was fortunate enough to find water. From there I went to Cane Springs, Desert Springs, the Sinks of Tehachapi, Oak Creek, Willow Springs, Elizabeth Lake, San Francisquito Cañon, over San Fernando Pass, where it took four yokes of cattle and a windlass to bring my team over the pass into the San Fernando Valley, and thence to Los Angeles.

After having some repairs made by John Goler, I left for San Pedro or Timm's Point for a load of goods for the mines in Slate Range, Timm's Point being the only port where freight was landed at that time. At that place I became acquainted with Tomlinson, who, together with Goler and Timms, were the owners of the landing. Mr. Tomlinson was then fixing up some teams to go to Salt Lake, I believe.

I found Mr. Hazard, the father of Dan, Henry and George Hazard there also, with ox-teams loading freight for some place. It is my opinion that old Mr. Hazard was the pioneer teamster of this part. He was also the pioneer teamster who hauled salt from the Salt Works near Redondo. But the boys did not stay long with him and his ox-teams. Henry T. went to study law; George commenced in the harness business, and Dan bought forty pack animals from Tomlinson and Griffith, and engaged in teaming for himself.

Ah! those were fine times, when the Hazard boys were punching oxen along the dusty roads for their father. I wonder if the Hon. Henry T. ever thinks of it now when he drives his fine automobile over the same roads at a speed of forty miles an hour instead of one mile an hour with his father's ox-teams. How times have changed!

When I stood at Timm's Point, San Pedro, not long ago, I marvelled at the change since 1857. At that time, I walked across the bar from Timm's Point to Dead-man's Island at low tide and scarcely got my feet wet; while now vessels, drawing more than twenty feet of water are crossing the same bar;—and seeing a fine fleet of vessels inside the harbor. In the early days it was a great sight to see more than one vessel in the outer harbor. It took me hours to come back to Los Angeles, whereas now a person can make the trip in forty minutes or less.

Coming back to Los Angeles—I remember Perry and Woods-worth in 1858 having their business in cabinet work on Main Street below where the Pico House now stands. I also found Louis Roeder and John Wilson working for John Goler on Los Angeles Street, and Joseph Mullally was making brick. In 1859 John Temple finished the market house for the city, which was afterwards the Court House. It stood on the site now occupied by the Bullard Block. The same year George Lehman finished his Garden of Paradise on Main Street between Third and Fourth Streets. The first German Society organized in this building in that year. Henry Hamilton was the publisher of "The Star" at that time.

I kept on teaming and mining until 1864, when our mine failed and broke us up in business. I had to go to work for Mr. Tomlinson and Mr. Griffith, at the magnificent sum of \$1.50 a day in their lumber yard on Spring Street, opposite the old Court House, until 1865. In justice to Mr. Griffith, I must say he raised my wages of his own accord without my going on a strike.

In my journeys from Los Angeles to the mines, I had some Indian and outlaw experiences on the desert. The first time that I was attacked by Indians was early one morning after leaving camp and driving up hill in Bed-rock Cañon. I was sitting on the corner of the wagon box smoking my pipe and dreaming of the fine times I would have after arriving in Los Angeles, when all at once I heard a most unearthly noise, and at the same time, a lot of arrows came flying about me; but luckily for me, none of them touched me. One of my mules was hit, and it frightened the rest of them. Up the hill they went at full speed (my wagon being empty in returning from the mines to Los Angeles), and this saved me. It gave me time to unbuckle my Henry 16 shooting rifle. I blazed away at them, but could not take aim on account of the wagon shaking so much. I kept them at bay until I got over the hill to down grade. I there lost sight of them.

By this time the mules were all tangled up. I straightened them out, and cut the arrow out of the wounded mule's flank, and then drove down to El Paso (twenty miles distant), where I usually made my camping place. When I came to this place, I found George Garbora and Jud Talbert camping by the springs. I told them that I had been attacked by Indians in the morning, and that it would be

advisable to go on to Desert Springs. It would be safer to camp there than in this place where we had no show of defending ourselves in case we were attacked by the Indians.

Talbert was willing to go and got into the wagon, but Garboro stated that he would stay; was not afraid of Indians, and furthermore, that there were no Indians in sight. I told him that my belief was that they were down below us in a "wash," as I had had several glimpses of them during the day in that direction. But George pooh-poohed it and stayed. I, together with Talbert, drove on to Desert Spring.

Next day I went with two men back to El Paso. We found poor George dead,—stripped of all clothing and horribly mutilated. We buried him on the spot. It being the middle of summer, we could not take the body back with us. If some of the eastern philanthropists could have seen this sight, and that of poor Mrs. McGuire and baby, who were murdered by Indians in Inyo County, I believe it would have changed their opinion of Indians somewhat.

My next experience with Indians was at Indian Wells, where about seventy-five Indians kept us coralled for about four days. There were seven men in my party, and we had a good adobe house with loop holes to protect us, and plenty of fire-arms. My team was in a stockade back of the house. The Indians tried several times to set fire to the stockade, but we frustrated their plans. On the fifth day, they left us to find other and easier victims to murder.

At another time, I was camping on the Kern River side of Walker's Pass, when a little before dark, I observed three Indians sneaking through the woods,—all armed with rifles. I went behind my team and got my gun, expecting every moment to be attacked; but for some cause they did not shoot. I got rather uneasy, as it was beginning to get dark, so I stepped from behind my wagon and made signs for one to come to me; but all three came, and I raised my gun. They all three scampered away behind the trees. Finally I made them understand that one should come unarmed, by my laying down my gun and holding up one finger.

Finally, one came without his gun. When he came up to me, he told me by signs and a little Spanish and English, that they were hungry and wanted something to eat. As I was loaded with provisions,—some fresh meat salted down in barrels, which I had gotten at Keysville on Kern River for the mines, I had plenty to give away, if they would leave me alone. I told my visitor that I would give them all they could pack under the condition that they leave this part of the woods. He promised me that they would. The fellow all this time was looking at my gun which I always kept ready for action. I kept him about twenty steps distant.

I took out a box of crackers, a side of bacon, and a couple of chunks of meat, and laid it on the ground. I told the fellow to take it and "vamoose," which he did by packing it over to his two "com-

paneros." But they did not feel like leaving; smashed the box of crackers with their guns and commenced to eat, which was not according to agreement, so I stepped out with gun in hand, and motioned them to leave, which they did at once. I kept wondering why they did not shoot, being three to one.

That night I did not sleep at all. Laying down on top of my wagon, I watched all night, but nothing happened until morning, when a company of Uncle Sam's dragoons came trotting up. The officer asked me if I had seen any Indians. He told me that several Indians had run away from Fort Tejon and stolen guns, but no ammunition. (That accounted for the Indians not shooting.) I gave them the desired information and away they sped. I afterwards found out that they came up with them and made three more good Indians.

Not long afterwards I arrived in Slate Range with a load of goods. That night the Indians made a raid on our corral, and drove off a dozen mules. Next morning, John Searles and I armed ourselves, and with a lot of crackers, dried meat, and a two-gallon canteen of water apiece, started on the trail of the Indians. We followed them across Slate Range Mountains to Death Valley, across the same into the Armegosa Mountains, where we got track of them.

We surprised them in a hollow. They were feasting on tongues cut from the poor mules. We commenced firing, and out of the whole bunch of twenty-one that we counted, there were only four,—three bucks and a squaw,—who did not go to their "happy hunting ground" at that time. The other seventeen were all good Indians before we left. We found only two mules alive, and took them back with us.

I had another exciting time with twenty Chinamen. They were hired in San Francisco and brought by steamer to San Pedro where the agent turned them over to me. They were hired to gather sagebrush and grease-wood for our mill, there being no other fuel anywhere near. As no white man could stand the heat in summer to do that kind of work, we thought of trying Chinamen.

After they were in my charge, I got rather suspicious that they were trying to get away from me. I hired several men to watch them until I left Los Angeles. After I left the city, everything went along all right until I left Elizabeth Lake and crossed the mountains. When the Chinamen got a glimpse of the desert, they broke and ran back, scattering through the hills.

I unhitched one of my mules, and with my trusty rifle, gave chase. I caught up with some of them and told them to go back, but they kept on running away from me, so I "winged" two of them. That brought them to their senses and they turned back with me to the team, where I turned doctor and dressed their wounds. I got them all safe to Slate Range. They made pretty fair cattle. One, who had been hurt in the runaway and had lost one eye, afterwards set-

tled in Los Angeles and became a merchant. He was one of my best friends in the city, and gave presents to my children every Christmas until he went back to China.

One time I was held up on the desert between the Sinks of Tehachepi and Desert Spring. Not by Indians, but by a set of the worst "white-horse" thieves and murderers that ever disgraced our civilization. They went through my load and took as much as they could pack. They told me to keep mum and tell no one that I had seen them, or it would be my last trip. I met them frequently afterwards, but they never molested me any more.

Several inquiries were made of me by officers of the law and soldiers who were hunting for the outlaws. Of course, under the circumstances, I did not know anything of them, nor had I seen them. (I hope no one will blame me for this.) They all got their deserts in good time afterwards. Every one of them died "with his boots on."

In the party were old man Robinson and two sons, the Kelso boys, Mason and Henry, and several others. (Old-timers will recollect some of the names.) Every one of the men I have mentioned here were killed; some by soldiers and others by officers of the law. I had the pleasure of being present when old man Robinson was sent to his "happy hunting-ground" by a man in Kelso Valley. Six buck-shot struged him in the head, but he died game. His last shot, for a wonder, missed his man.

I could mention several other scrapes I got into in California, Arizona, Inyo and Nevada, but they did not amount to much. But there is one little episode that happened to me in Los Angeles while I was teaming, which changed my wild life to that of a law-abiding citizen.

Coming up one evening from Taft's Corral on Aliso Street, where I kept my team, to Los Angeles Street, I heard music in the Arcadia Block. I thought I would go in and see what it was. Upstairs I went to the box office to buy a ticket, but nary a ticket would they sell me. I told them my money was as good as theirs. They said:

"Yes, but look at your suit. We do not allow any desperadoes in here, for this is a German Ball, and people have to dress decently."

By this time, I took an inventory of myself, and found it not very inviting. Here is a picture of myself. (By the way, I have that picture hanging in my room today.) Fancy a man with his pants on the other side of his boots, partly split open from the hip down and tied with a baling-rope; a gray shirt not overly clean; a dirty handkerchief around his neck; a big sombrero on his head; not having been shaved for two months; very little soap had touched the face up to this time; and a great dragoon pistol on his hip.

I came to the conclusion that I did not look very inviting, so back to the corral I went and hunted up my friend Mike Nolan, a brother teamster. He was the only one who had a "boiled shirt and store clothes," as we called them at that time. I found Mike and he loaned

me his "duds." After arraying myself in the same, I got a shave and posted back to the hall. At the box-office, Mendel Meyer came out and told me that now they would let me in as I looked all right.

"But," said Mendel, "did you leave that pistol at home?"

"Sure, Mike," I said, "I never carry such a thing among quality folks."

But I did not feel exactly right. The clothes did not fit; the pants were about three inches short, and the collar was choking me. I made the best of it and went in. Oh! it was a fine sight that greeted my eyes. Girls of all shades and colors, arrayed in fine calico dresses, and whirling about in the mazes of the waltz.

By and by I was introduced to some of the girls. Then I was in my element, while whirling and sailing with them around the hall. You ought to have seen me "splice the main-brace," and take a "reef in a cocktail." "Shiver my timbers," if I couldn't "hoist in more top gallant yards" of soda-water than a Good Templar. (I was a sailor-boy once.)

Finally, I was introduced to a little "bunch of calico" by my friend Louis Roeder. That settled me, and I have been settled ever since by that little bunch of calico. I have it yet, and have never been sorry that I got it. That bunch of calico contained a little girl of sixteen. As soon as I found that out, I was stuck, not in the mud, but on that calico and what it contained.

I kept as near her as I could for the rest of the ball. After that, I did not borrow any more clothes from my friend Mike, but bought the finest that Mendel Meyer had in his store, and thus arrayed, I watched around the corner for my "enamorata," and so persistently I kept at it that in a short time, that bunch of calico and what it contained was mine, and as I stated before, I have it today,—my wife for over forty odd years. God bless her! for what I am today is in a great measure due to her.

I will here give a short sketch of my political career, and things that I have observed since my arrival in this city.

The most exciting times I have seen in Los Angeles were in the 60's. In 1861-1862, we had the great freshet, when it rained steadily for almost three weeks, but did not do much damage, as the city was not built up at that time. The years 1863 and 1864 were the driest years that Southern California ever experienced, I believe. Almost all the cattle died of starvation. In 1863, several outlaws were hung by the Vigilance Committee in front of the old jail on Spring Street, where the Hamburger Store now stands. The same year small-pox almost exterminated the population of Los Angeles, and no wonder, as our water supply was very poor. Carts hauled water from the zanjias and river at \$2 a month for ten buckets of water a day. Our Mexican and Indian population used the zanjias and river for washing their clothing and bathing. This accounted in a great measure for our sickness at that time.

Real estate was not very high in the 60's. I will mention one deal in which I was interested with a man by the name of Sam Mayburn, who was the owner of the property on the corner of Second and Spring Streets, where the Hollenbeck Hotel now stands, clear through to Broadway. Sam owed me \$50 at that time, and I was very anxious to get it. I dunned him for the same. He told me that he had no money to pay his debts, but he would sell me his lot. I was not very anxious to buy lots but at the same time I wanted the fifty dollars, so I asked him what he held his lot at. He stated that it ought to bring about \$2,500. That was an exorbitant price, so I offered him \$1800 for the same, and the bargain was closed.

I gave him some more money to pay for an abstract, and Sam went out. In two days he returned and stated that he was offered \$100 more than our bargain called for, and begged me to release him from the bargain, as \$100 was a fortune to him. I asked him who the fool was that had so much money to put in a lot that I thought would only be worth \$1,000 on the outside. Sam told me it was Frank Burns, an old friend of ours, who had offered him \$1900. Sam paid me my money, and I threw up the contract, thinking how lucky I was to escape that dreadful bargain.

Sam Mayburn paid for the same property \$600, and Frank Burns afterwards sold it for \$6500, and thought he had made a great fortune. What is the same property worth today?

I could mention several other cases, but they were all on the same style as the foregoing.

We had a few duels in the 60's. The first I recollect was in the Bella Union Hotel between the King Brothers and Bob Carlisle. Carlisle and one of the Kings were killed, and J. H. Landers was hit by a stray bullet, but recovered. The next was a duel between Col. Kewen and the "Flying Dutchman" on Los Angeles Street. The "Flying Dutchman" was badly hurt, but recovered. Another was between Col. Kewen and Charles Howard. This was prevented by their ladies just in the nick of time. Still another was between Charles Howard and Nichols, son of a former mayor of this city, in the Lafayette Hotel. Howard was killed. Things became a little too fast in the city at that time, and five desperadoes were hanged by the Vigilance Committee at the gate-way cross-bar back of the Downey Building.

In 1868, we got the first gas-works, the first railroad from Wilmington, and the first bank. At that time, we were a happy cosmopolitan set in the city, all like one family. One instance of a St. Patrick's day in Los Angeles comes to my mind. On a St. Patrick's celebration, everybody was Irish and wore the green, and joined in the parade, regardless of where he came from or of his belief.

One St. Patrick's Day, Governor Downey was to make the oration after the parade. Unfortunately, the Governor got slightly under the weather, and the society was without an orator. But Irish



wit is always good, and helped us out on that day. One made the remark:

"We will pick up an orator before we get to the hall," and sure enough they did.

As the parade went up Main Street, they met Frank Lecouvreur coming from the Court House, where he was Deputy County Clerk. They pressed him into the ranks, and told him that he had to make a speech for this occasion. He said that he was a German and knew nothing of St. Patrick. That made no difference, he had to make the speech, and he did. Every one said it was the best oration they had ever heard, and a good deal better than Governor Downey could have made under the circumstances.

As stated heretofore, I worked for Mr. Griffith until 1865, when I quit my job and engaged in mercantile trade on Spring Street, where the Shumacher Block now stands. Two years later, I removed to the corner of First and Main Streets, and here I have since made my home. I kept at the mercantile business until 1878, when I retired.

I will give a short sketch of the old Volunteer Fire Department of the city. In 1871 the first fire company, No. 1, was organized by all the prominent men in town, including four former mayors of this city, Henry T. Hazard, Cameron Thom, Tom Rowan and Fred Eaton. Ben. C. Truman of "The Star," Matthew Keller, C. C. Lips, Billy Wilson, E. H. Workman, Victor Ponet, and several other business men were also members. Toberman, was Mayor and helped us to get the machine.

We had to draw the engine and hose-pumper by hand until 1874, when the company became tired of drawing the machines through the sand by hand. The Council persistently refused to purchase horses, and the company disbanded. Immediately after the disbanding, many of the old members of No. 1, with the addition of others to the number of thirty-eight, reorganized under the name of "Thirty-eight's No. 1."

Being a member of the Council at that time, I used all my influence to help the boys out in getting horses to draw the apparatus, and we did get them.

In 1875, two other companies organized, "Confidence No. 2," and the "Hook and Ladder Co. No. 1," Shortly afterwards "Park Hose Co." "East Los Angeles Co." and the "Morris Vineyard Co." were organized. All companies remained in service until the installation of the paid departments in 1886.

In 1879, the "Thirty-eights" gave a banquet in honor of their twenty-four exempts, the finest affair of the kind ever held in Los Angeles. It was given in the old Horticultural Pavilion on Temple Street. At about nine o'clock, the literary part of the evening proceedings began. Seated upon the stand were Mayor J. R. Tob-

erman, J. Kuhrts, Master of Ceremonies; General R. H. Chapman, Orator; L. E. Mosher and G. A. Dobinson, Poets.

Following is a list of the exempts: George P. McLain, J. Kuhrts, E. H. Workman, Thomas Atwell, Joe Breson, Fred Dohs, D. Desmond, T. Froehlinger, W. H. Green, W. T. McDonald, M. D. Madigan, Sidney Lacey, C. E. Miles, Dave Mair, H. Sheerer, Mendal Meyer, C. A. Johnson, T. W. Hill, S. J. Lynch, W. Sands, F. Toll, George E. Gard, W. R. Bettis, and L. G. Green.

At the banquet, Mr. C. C. Lipps (father of the present Fire Chief), officiated as toast-master. "The Exempts" was responded to by George E. Gard; "The Press" by J. J. Ayers; "Confidence No. 2" by Walter S. Moore; "The Judiciary" by J. D. Lynch, in the absence of Judge Sepulveda; "The Ladies" by J. D. Eastman; "Park Hose" by S. H. Buchanan; "Our City" by Col. J. F. Godfrey.

Charles E. Miles was the first Chief of the Department. He served from 1876 to 1880, when I was elected Chief, serving for three years. At that time, I was also elected President of the Exempt Fireman's Association. I was also a member of the Veteran Fireman's Association of San Francisco.

We had "heaps" of fun in the old hand-engine days. We had many fights. I never got badly hurt in any of them. Of course, I have had my teeth loosened, eyes blackened and fingers broken, but nothing serious. The boys used to start a blaze now and then, for fun or to get the best of the other companies. Then, of course, it ended with a fight. Oh! those were glorious times.

The paid fire department was created by the Council in January, 1886, by the selection of a Board of Fire Commissioners, consisting of Mayor E. F. Spence; H. Sinsabaugh, President of the Council, and J. Kuhrts, member of the Council.

I have served as a Fire Commissioner from that date until January, 1905, nineteen years. I served the City as Councilman for twelve years, and in 1889, I had the honor of being its President.

In 1883, being chairman of the Board of Public Works, the Council had to appoint a Superintendent of Streets, and there being no money in the Treasury to pay the same, Andy Ryan, a member of the Council, stated that, as I was the Chairman of the Board of Public Works, I could just as well be appointed Street Superintendent, and I was appointed. I held that office to the end of my term without pay.

I was again appointed to the same office in 1888. At that time, the Council passed an ordinance to extend Los Angeles Street through Chinatown to the Plaza, but the property owners of Chinatown objected to having their buildings removed. At that time, the buildings extended clear across Los Angeles Street to Negro Alley, so the Council instructed me to remove them. I hired about a hundred men, and on a certain morning had them on the ground by four o'clock with battering rams and other instruments, and by

ten o'clock in the morning, I had razed nearly every building between Arcadia Street and the Plaza, when an injunction was filed upon me by Col. G. Wiley Wells. But the mischief was done, and Los Angeles Street was opened as it is today.

So you see, my time has been taken up with official life for a good many years in this city, until our present Mayor, Mr. McAleer, thought I had better retire from public life for my health's sake, and he retired me (without a pension).

Having lost my fat job (no pay) I had to make a living somehow, so I took to hunting and fishing. I have been lucky enough to bring plenty home for the table, so that the "old lady" and the "kids" need not go hungry or starve at the present time.

With thanks to all for listening to the foregoing sketch, I remain,  
Your Brother Pioneer,

J. KUHRTS.

Los Angeles, Cal., Oct. 2nd, 1906.